

~~TOP SECRET~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
15 March 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

25X1

63 25X1

~~TOP SECRET~~

Page Denied

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
15 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

The US Air Strike on Phu Qui

1. Approximately 150 US Navy and Air Force planes struck the Phu Qui ammunition depot 180 miles north of the demilitarized zone at 1400 local Vietnam time (0100 EST) on 15 March. The target area, consisting of 26 storage buildings, is less than 40 miles from the Laotian border and may be used to support Communist forces in Laos.
2. One aircraft was lost at sea while returning to the Ranger. There were no other losses.
3. Returning pilots report heavy flak was encountered in the target area. Three aircraft were slightly damaged by ground fire.
4. Initial pilot debriefings indicate that all facilities in the target area were in flames and that there were many secondary explosions--presumably from exploding ammunition dumps. Pilots consider the strike "highly successful."

25X1

6. Preliminary post-strike photo-reconnaissance from the 14 March South Vietnamese air force attack on the Tiger Island barracks reveals 38 bomb craters in the target area. One building was partially destroyed, another severely damaged, and three more sustained some roof damage. There were only nine administrative and storage buildings in the target area.

25X1

Communist Political Developments

7. The initial North Vietnamese reaction to the attack on Tiger Island was a sharp protest to the ICC calling for an "immediate end to all acts of war" and urging "correct" implementation of the Geneva Accords of 1954. There has been no major propaganda reaction from Peiping. In reporting the attack, Moscow radio commented that the US is stretching the situation in Vietnam "to the bursting point."

25X1

9. A press report from New Delhi alleges that the Soviet Union is asking several non-aligned nations--including India--to inform the US that Peiping will "intervene directly" in Vietnam if the air attacks on the DRV are not stopped. This report remains unconfirmed and has not yet been repeated by other news services.

10. Peiping continues to berate the USSR for alleged brutality against Chinese students at the anti-American demonstration in Moscow on 4 March. Yesterday four of the students returned from the Soviet Union and were given a heroes' welcome at Peiping's airport. People's Daily in an acid commentary on 15 March charges that the Soviet Government has placed itself "under the thumb of US imperialism."

Viet Cong Military Activity

11. The Viet Cong yesterday placed mortar fire on a district capital about 25 miles south of Da Nang, causing relatively light casualties. No large-scale fighting has been reported in the past 24 hours, but the Communists remain generally active throughout the country.

12. In a recent briefing of US and Vietnamese officials, a South Vietnamese armed forces spokesman

25X1

stated that Viet Cong regular strength in the central coastal province of Binh Dinh has risen from about 2,600 to 3,600 since early 1965. In response, the government has sent in four battalions from its general reserve--with another en route--and one Ranger battalion. The spokesman attributed deterioration in the province, however, not so much to a disparity of military force as to a local administrative breakdown, passive military command, lowered morale even among the newly committed reserve troops, and loss of confidence by the local population.

13. Premier Quat has proposed the creation of a special military sector in Binh Dinh to try to overcome command weaknesses, and an intensive program among refugees--now numbering over 50,000 in the province--in the hope that they may eventually be returned to their homes.

Political Developments in South Vietnam

14. The political situation in Saigon remains tense, partly in anticipation of early organizational meetings by both the Armed Forces Council and the Buddhists.

15. There are still no firm indications of any imminent coup attempt. General Thi, the most widely rumored plotter, has been preoccupied with military problems in northern I Corps during the weekend, and has reportedly declared himself solidly behind the Quat government. Uneasiness nevertheless persists over an impending challenge to General "Little" Minh's position as commander-in-chief and over the selection of a chief of the Joint General Staff, with some officers complaining that Premier Quat is trying to exert his own influence on these issues.

16. The Buddhist meeting, scheduled this week to delineate internal responsibilities, may develop overtones of a contest for power as a result of the resurgent influence of Tam Chau following his recent successful tour of Tri Quang's central Vietnam bailiwick. Some of the militants now backing Chau appear less favorably inclined toward the government than is Quang at present and more willing to assert themselves politically.

25X1

25X1

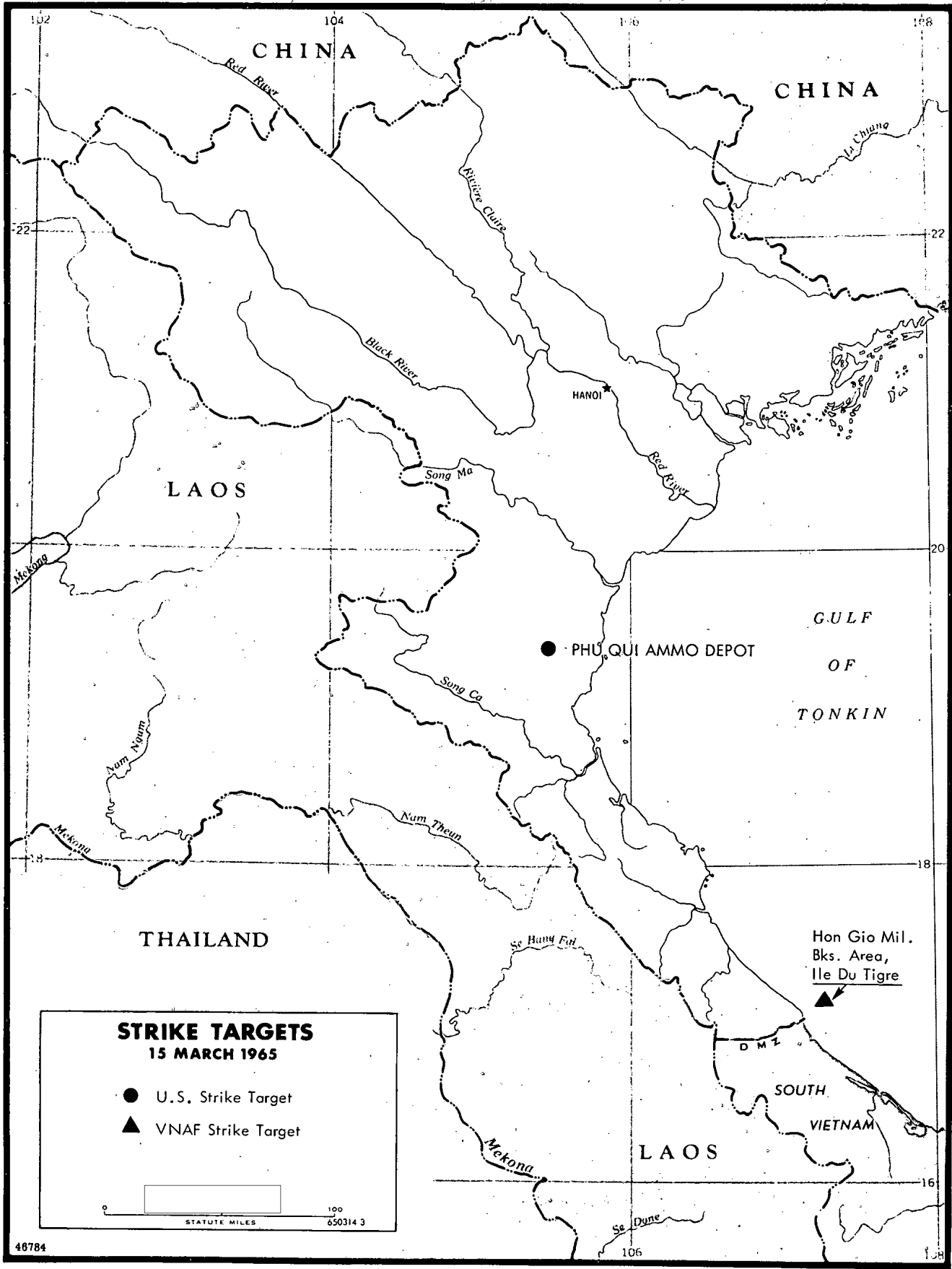
25X1

18. Meanwhile, General Thi is reported by the press to have stated that three leading members of the pro-neutralist South Vietnam People's Self-Determination Movement will be parachuted into North Vietnam today. General Thi had earlier recommended that these men, part of a group that had signed a petition calling for an immediate ceasefire and negotiations, be deported to the north.

25X1

NORTH VIETNAM

25X1



25X1

~~TOP SECRET~~

TOP SECRET